

The Position of Muslim Scholars on Violent Conflicts and Transgression

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Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May His peace and blessings be upon His Noble Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), members of his Household, Companions and those who follow in their footsteps with good deeds.

Peace and social stability are unarguably among the highest favours and endowments of God to humanity. All human endeavours, activities, struggles, movements and other undertakings are closely and strongly connected, and to a large extent determined by the degree of peace and stability in a particular environment or social setting. Therefore, without peace, human beings will not develop and prosper. Likewise, nations and societies will not rise, grow and flourish except if there is peace and stability. In other words, human beings will not, at individual and institutional levels move forward and experience an affluent and comfortable life, with sufficient physical and psychological steadiness except if there is a prevalence of peace in their societies. It is only then that they shall be able to realize the highest objectives of their basis of existence, on top of which is the worship of their Creator, Allah the Almighty. Once there is no peace in the society, a way is paved for the intrusion of misery and disorder. Hence, chaos and too much bloodshed will become the order of the day, which will altogether throw the society backward and off the road to progress and development in multidimensional aspects of life. Consequently, it will be difficult or even impossible to discharge the basic aspects of religious duties and obligations as enjoined by the Creator.

It was in this regard that God reminded the Quraysh polytheists in Makkah of His favour upon them when He established peace and social stability in their midst, while at the time, other parts of the world were engulfed in chaos and crisis due to absence of peace. The Glorious Qur'an depicts this scenario in the following verses: -

چ چ چ چ چ ی د ذ ڈ ژ ر چ العنکبوت: ٦٧.

“Do they not then see that We have made a sanctuary secure, and that men are being snatched away from all around them? Then, do they believe in that which is vain, and reject the Grace of Allah?”. Surah al-Ankabut: 67.

He also says:

[illegible]

“They say: "If we were to follow the guidance with thee, we should be snatched away from our land." Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary, to which are brought as tribute fruits of all kinds,- a provision from Ourselves? But most of them understand not”. Surah al-Qasas: 57.

God the Almighty stresses this in another place where He says: -

□□ چ پ پ پ ی ی ث ت ن ت ت ت ق قریش: ۳ - ۴.
“Let them worship the Lord of this House. Who provides them with
food against hunger, and with security against fear [of danger].”

Surah Quraysh: 3-4.

In response to the chaotic situations, too much bloodshed and destructive crisis that bedevil the society and bring about

unprecedented magnitude of disproportionate loss of lives, displacement and taking of hostages, Muslim scholars have risen to the challenge and played their roles in mitigating the menace. Both on an individual capacity and as a collective body, Muslim scholars have addressed the peril in many ways namely; surveying its causes, diagnosing and delineating its factors and impacts as well as pointing out the position and viewpoint of Islam on the issue.

Insurgency and insurrectionist activities have wreaked a lot of havoc, wanton destruction and mess in the majority of Muslim societies. Thousands of innocent lives of women, children and dotards have been squandered, in addition to the loss of properties worth billions of naira. Muslim scholars have severally condemned the untoward development and sought to charter and propose panacea to bring the predicament to a halt.

This paper attempts to present the position of Muslim scholars on the concatenations of bloodsheds, massacres, and destructions unleashed by different groups or individuals in the name of Jihad and Islam. It points out the Islamic viewpoint on the nuisance and checkmates the attempts of some people to link it with Islam and Muslim scholars through their unsuccessful attempt to fish in troubled waters, distort the image of Islam and bring down its academic symbols in which they will never succeed.

Muslim Scholars' Condemnation of Terrorism and Insurgency

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been an increase of insurrectionist activities, killing and destruction of lives in the majority of Muslim nations. To a large extent, innocent women, children and dotards who have not committed any offence are the major victims and recipients of those dastardly and atrocious actions.

Muslim scholars have not all this while, been reluctant but active in discharging their duties on the unfortunate situations. They have condemned these terrorist operations and explained the Islamic position and ruling on the menace. Furthermore, they diagnosed and identified the causes and factors that warranted the emergence of these groups. Below we cite a few examples: -

In the year 1412 A.H (1990), the Council of Senior Scholars in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (*Hai'at Kibar al-Ulama'*) in its 49th council meeting issued a fatwa (legal ruling) in which it condemned all the killings, bloodsheds, destructions, bomb explosion and the gale of *takfir* (excommunication) which surface in most Muslim nations. The body described these actions as criminal offence are according to the consensus of Muslim Ummah *haram* (forbidden).¹

The scholars also condemned the criminal activities which occurred simultaneously in different provinces in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia such as the bomb explosion of Ulayyah Quarter, Riyadh on 20/06/1416 A.H and another bomb explosion in al-Khubar city in the Sharqiyyah province on 09/02/1417 A.H.²

Another scholarly body which also issued condemnations included International Union for Muslim Scholars (*al-Ittihad al-Alami li Ulama' al-Muslimin*). It is an umbrella body which comprises varied and variety of Muslim scholars around the globe. It was headed by Shaykh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi and now by Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Al-Raisuni.

The umbrella body has censured a lot of atrocities, killing and displacement which some groups perpetrate in the name of Jihad and Islam. The scholars denounced and castigated the violent actions of

1 Al-Minawi, Abu Hamzah Sayyid bin Muhammad. *Talkhis Fitnah al-Tafjirat wa al-Ightiyalat: al-Asbab, al-Athar wa al-Ilaj*. First Edition.(Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 2007/1428), 174.

2 Al-Minawi, *Talkhis Fitnah al-Tafjirat*, 164.

similar group in Kabul, the Afghan capital which unleashed an attack against many civilians and killed many minors and defenseless persons including women and children and left many wounded. The condemnation was released by the Secretary General of the union, Shaykh Dr. Ali Muhyiddin al-Qarah Dagiiyy.³

In the same vein, the scholars expressed their strong disapproval on the militant attack which occurred in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. According to French agencies, the death toll of 28 innocent civilians were recorded, in addition to a great number of those who were wounded. The Secretary General has described the attack as barbaric, dastardly, criminal and terrorist action. He stressed that Islam harbours no such inhumane and brutal activities.⁴

It is imperative to note that the scholars' condemnation of these violent actions are not limited to situations or places in which the victims happen to be Muslims. They, in similar spirit, also condemn attacks that were launched against humanity in general, without the slightest regard to any geographical or religious identity of the victim. In this regard, one may recollect that the scholars have strongly expressed their censure on the series of deadly attacks and bomb explosions which were launched against three churches and police stations in Surabaya city in the eastern zone of Java District in Indonesia. The attack left scores of casualties, ranging from those who were helplessly murdered and others who were seriously wounded. Properties worth millions of dollars were also destroyed.⁵

Another body of Muslim scholars who also condemn violent actions is the Union of African Muslim Scholars (*Ittihad Ulama' Ifriqiya*). It is an umbrella body which comprises over 400 Muslim scholars and Da'wah

³ See <http://www.iumsonline.org/ar/contentDetails.aspx?ID=8449>.

⁴ For details visit <http://www.iumsonline.org/ar/contentDetails.aspx?ID=8360>.

⁵ For details visit <http://www.iumsonline.org/ar/contentDetails.aspx?ID=8477>

workers in sub-Saharan Africa. The body has maintained its stand of condemning all insurrectionist activities of murder, bomb explosion and human displacement that occur both within and outside the body's area of scholarly jurisdiction. In a number of occasions, the union can be heard denouncing all these pugnacious tendencies, which are detestable and repugnant even by a sense of humanity, let alone a system of belief like Islam. For instance, in its 18th Declaration issued on 22/11/1438 A.H equivalent to 14/08/2017, the Union condemned the series of violent attacks that were unleashed on some West African and Sahelian territories. They included the terrorist attacks that were carried out in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso which resulted to the death of a number of foreign nationals such as Shaykh Dr. Walid al-Ali, the Chief Imam of Kuwaiti Central Mosque, Shaykh Fahd al-Husaini. The two clerics visited Burkina Faso as resource persons in a seminar on Da'wah and some philanthropic missions for the benefit of the Burkineese, especially the poor masses and the downtrodden.⁶

The Union also released a strongly-worded condemnation on an attack that was carried out in Madinah, Saudi Arabia on Ramadan 29, 1437 A.H and the bomb explosion which followed the attack in other provinces of the Kingdom.⁷

Similarly, Muslim Scholars' Association (*Rabitah Ulama' al-Muslimin*), a joint network of Muslim scholars who are drawn from many walks of life and different quarters around the globe expressed its position on these militant attacks. More particularly, the association articulated its vituperation on the serial bomb explosions which occurred in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially the one blasted in Madinah in 1437 (2016), which seemed to be the deadliest. The association has

⁶ See the Declaration of the Union on 22/11/1438 A.H (14/08/2017).

⁷ See the Declaration of the Union on 1/10/1437 A.H (6/7/2016).

described the attack as wanton, aggressive and barbarous operation that had no slightest bearing or link with Islam.

Muslim Scholars' Description of Violence and Insurgency

Muslim scholars have unanimously agreed that all the activities of the violent and militant groups, including their series of attacks and bomb explosions, mostly carried out in the name of Jihad and Islam are criminal acts that have no slightest connection with Islam.

The Council of Senior Scholars (*Hai'at Kibar al-Ulama'*) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has described the activities as tyrannical, criminal acts, and betrayal as well as defiance to the cardinal principles of Islamic teachings. The activities trample over the rights of people towards life, possession of property and living in peace and social stability.⁸ The scholars have added that these militant activities pose threat to sanctity of life and stand as a stumbling block to peace, social stability and the life of people and all their struggles and life endeavours. The situation represents a big challenge that mitigates the realization of essential and inevitable public goals without which life would be unbearable to people.⁹

The scholars have further condemned the atrocities, noting that they fall within the universally detested and repulsed acts such as killing of minors and innocent people, destroying properties and public institutions and razing public establishments.¹⁰

The International Union of Muslim Scholars, through its Secretary General Shaykh Dr. Muhyiddin al-Qarah Dagiy described these

⁸ For details check Al-Minawi, *Talkhis Fitnah al-Tafjirat*, 167, 174.

⁹ See Al-Minawi, *Talkhis Fitnah al-Tafjirat*, 169-170.

¹⁰ See Al-Minawi, *Talkhis Fitnah al-Tafjirat*, 164.

operations as criminal, violent, terrorist, villainous and cowardly acts.¹¹

The Union of African Muslim Scholars also described the actions in the same detestable and repugnant tone. It regarded their perpetrators as criminal and tyrannical, irrespective of their claim.¹²

Also, Muslim Scholars' Association (*Rabitah Ulama' al-Muslimin*) described the actions as tyranny, corruption, evil and causing mischief on earth.¹³

Muslim Scholars' Description of Insurgents and Guerilla

Muslim scholars have given various descriptions to insurgents and guerillas who perpetrate murderous activities by unleashing terror and deadly attacks, killing innocent people and detonating explosives against government symbols. The scholars explain that the crimes the insurgents commit against humanity do not have any basis in Islam. The Council of Senior Scholars in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have categorically described them as people bereft of piety and faith, and that they have evil and malicious souls.¹⁴ They added that none should have the guts and audacity to carry out such deadly attacks except someone with a wicked soul and is full of grudge, envy and treachery and who does not have any goodwill or concern to humanity.¹⁵

In the same vein, the Union of African Muslim Scholars has considered them as people informed by Khawarij extremist thoughts and tendencies, and that they are advancers of deviant ideology.¹⁶ Muslim Scholars' Association (*Rabitah Ulama' al-Muslimin*) also

11 :Visit <http://www.iumsonline.org/ar/contentDetails.aspx?ID=8449>

12 See the Declaration of the Union on 22/11/1438 A.H (14/08/2017).

13 See the Association's Declaration no. 69 issued on 30/09/1437.

14 See Al-Minawi, *Talkhis Fitnah al-Tafjirat*, 164.

15 See Al-Minawi, 197.

16 The Union's Declaration no. 15 issued on 01/10/1437 (06/07/2016).

defined them as people who operate within the context of the Khawarij creed, and that their deviant ideologies bring nothing to the Ummah other than malevolent destruction, mayhem and misery.¹⁷

Similarly, Shaykh Muhammad Nasiruddeen Albani described them as rebellious people who excommunicate Muslim leaders, and that nothing comes out of them except misery, crises and disturbance. The scholar has made reference to the crisis which erupted in many Muslim nations, which brought about drastic consequences of bloodshed and massacre of innocent Muslims.¹⁸

Islamic Viewpoint on Insurgents and Guerillas

As mentioned earlier, Muslim scholars have issued fatwa (Islamic rulings) on violent and criminal actions and the position of Islam on their perpetrators. The scholars include Shaykh Abdul'aziz bin Abdallah bin Baz,¹⁹ Shaykh Muhammad bin Salih al-Uthaimin²⁰, Shaykh Salih bin Fawzan al-Fawzan,²¹ Shaykh al-Qadhi Salih bin al-Leihedan,²² Shaykh Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi,²³ Shaykh al-Mufti Abdul'aziz bin Abdallah al-Shaykh,²⁴ among others.

The scholars also delineate the Islamic ruling on the perpetration of these actions which they pass the Islamic verdict as haram by the consensus of the entire Muslim scholars.²⁵

17 The Association's Declaration no. 69 issued on 30/09/1437.

18 Al-Minawi, 177.

19 See al-Qahtani, Muhammad bin Husain. *Fatawa al-Aimmah fi al-Nawazil al-Mudlahimmah*, 25.

20 See Ibn Uthaimin, Muhammad bin Salih. *Majmu' Fatawa wa Rasa'iluh* (25/430-432, 434-437).

21 See al-Qahtani, (41—42).

22 See al-Qahtani, (31).

23 Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. *Fiqh al-Jihad: Dirasah Muqaranah Li Ahkamihi wa Falsafatihi fi Dhaw' al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah*. Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, second edition (n.d), 2/1198-1199, 1318.

24 See al-Qahtani, 27.

25 See Mujallah al-Fiqh al-Islamiy, Number 2 (p. 181), Issue no. (148) in the 32 dated 12/1/1409 A.H, also al-Qahtani, *Fatawa al-Aimmah fi al-Nawazil al-Mudlahimmah* (p. 11), al-Matrudi, Abdurrahman, *Nazrah fi Mafhum al-Irhab wa al-Mauqif minh fi al-*

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ٹ ٹ ط ط ق ف ج [المائدة: ۳۲].

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چ ک ک ک ک گ گ گ گ گ [المائدة: ۳۳].

Islam. Saudi Arabia: Wizarah al-Awqaf (59-60), (without publication information), Al-Minawi, *Fitnah al-Tafjiir wa al-Iqtiyalat* (167-164).

He also says:-

چ ک ک ک ک و و چ [الأعراف: ٥٦].

“Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order . . .”
(Surah al-A’raf: 56)

Also commenting on the verse, Ibn Kathir said, “Allah the Almighty prohibits the making of mischief on earth and the harm it brings after reform. Therefore, when things are going in order and then mischief is committed, it will bring more harm on [Allah’s] servants. Thus, Allah prohibits it [the mischief].²⁷

Imam Abu Abdallah al-Qurtubi also said, “Allah the Almighty has prohibited all forms of mischief, no matter how heinous or mild, after reform measures have been put in place. According to the most authentic [scholarly] opinions, this [ruling] is general”.²⁸

The scholars have shown clearly that all these atrocities do not have the slightest connection with Islam, and that they are not a Jihad in the course of Allah. According to a statement issued by the Union of African Muslim Scholars (*Ittihad Ulama' Ifriqiya*) on some attacks launched by militant groups in Mali, "in addition to Shari'ah stipulations and existing realities, the Union hereby upholds that it is not proper to describe the attacks launched by militant groups as Jihad in the cause of Allah, and that the negative consequences produced by their actions are by far more than the reform (if any) which they claimed to aim at bringing".²⁹

27 See Ibn Kathir, Ismail bin Umar, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, (3/429).

28 See Al-Qurtubi, Muhammad bin Ahmad, *Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, edited by Muhammad bin Ali al-Misriyy and Nasir bin Abdallah Ismail, Dar Ibn al-Haitham (Dar Bidayah), first edition, 1432 A.H (2012), 4/183.

29 See the Union's Declaration no. 6 issued on 07/03/1434 (19/01/2013).

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we can summarize that despite differences in their approaches and methodologies, the entire Muslim scholars have unanimously agreed on the prohibition of these violent actions and that their perpetrators are criminals. They pointed out that these actions are bereft of any Islamic spirit and that they produce negative outcomes and drastic consequences on the Muslim Ummah, in addition to curtailing efforts of Da'wah activities. The Muslim Ummah has reaped nothing from the untoward development except backwardness, weakness and humiliation. Too much blood of innocent people has been shed. Thousands of mosques and schools have been destroyed and set ablaze. Towns and villages and their residents were rendered homeless. Now, there are millions of displaced people most of whom are widowed and orphaned children. They have no refuge and no one is there to cater for them to the extent that churches and Christian clergies have started adopting them with a motive to convert them to Christianity. How can this be regarded as Jihad which was primarily meant to protect the integrity and strength of Islam, and to pave way for the smooth spread of Islam and ridding Muslim societies of tyranny and other social woes and evils?

A swift and shrewd glance at the drastic consequences produced by these violent attacks and destruction makes one, without much intellectual labour, to know how distant the perpetrators are from the truth. One can easily realize that these actions on one hand, and the basic tenets of Islamic teachings and the spirit of Islamic Shari'ah on the other hand, are two worlds apart.

Therefore, the people whose consciences are chained and manacled by deviant thoughts and ideologies need to wake up from their slumber and see the results and outcomes of their handiwork. If at all

as they claim, belong to the fold of Islam and aspire to be regarded as Muslims, they should work towards demonstrating good example to the Ummah and put efforts in uplifting it and restoring its past glories. As such, they should help in assisting the humanity to live peaceful life as the Ummah did in the past centuries.

May Allah guide us to the right path, for He Alone is Sufficient to all, and the best on Whom all shall rely.

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